



Principle 8: Look for patterns.

The goal of reviewing formative assessment is not to be able to say, “Six students made As, seven made Bs, ten made Cs, and so on.” Neither is the goal to create 32 lesson plans for 32 students. Rather, it is to find patterns in the students’ work that point the way to planning classroom instruction that both moves students along a learning continuum and is manageable.

Patterns will vary widely with the focus of the assessment. In one instance, a teacher may see some students who have already mastered the content, others who are fine with computations but not word problems, still others who know how to tackle the word problems but are making careless errors, and another group that is struggling with prerequisite knowledge of skills.

In another instance, a teacher may find that one group of students can provide causes of an event but no evidence for their reasoning, while other students are able to provide both causes and evidence. In still another case, a teacher may see students who understand the general idea being assessed but lack academic vocabulary to write with precision, while other students are using appropriate academic vocabulary. The possibilities are many, but the goal is to look for clusters of student need and plan ways to help each group of students move ahead.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). The Bridge Between Today’s Lesson and Tomorrow’s. *Educational Leadership*, 71(6), 10-14.



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